THE OBSERVER.

NEW-YORK:

SUNDAY MORNING, MAY 21, 1809.

On Affectation of the Vices and Follies of Men of Eminence.

It has frequently happened that men distinguished by their genius, have, from an unsettled habit of life, from an affectation of singularity, or from uncommon warmth of constitution, neglected the rules of prudence, and plunged themselves into the miseries of vice and dissipation. They who are but slightly acquainted with the lives of our English writers can recollect many instances of men of the brightest parts, whose lives, after an uninterrupted course of misery, have terminated under the pressure of want in the confinement of a gaol. They have been admired, and at the same time neglected; praised, and at the same time starved.

As the consequences of their imprudence are generally fatal, and generally known, a reasonable mind would scarcely believe that any should be found ambitious of treading in their footsteps, when they err. Yet, such attraction has the brilliancy of literary reputation, that every witling who pens a stanza while he should be engrossing a deed, looking upon himself as a genius of uncommon magnitude, thinks it necessary, in order to complete his character, to plunge into the excesses of drunkenness and debauchery. When his follies have thrown him out of his profession, ruined his health, and shut him up in a prison, he consoles himself with reflecting, that he shares the same fate which the great wits, his predecessors, have suffered before him. He is happy even to be wretched, with an Otway, a Dryden, or a Savage.

This unfortunate conduct is owing to a mistaken opinion, too generally adopted, that vice is the mark of laudable spirit, and that spirit is the characteristic of genius. Prudence, caution, common sense, are, in the idea of many, the concomitants of dulness. The phlegmatic disposition of a fool, say they, can guide him through life in the straight road of prudence; but the volatility of genius is continually tempted to turn out of the direct path to gather flowers

on the sides, to view every pleasing prospect, and to discover new ways through unfrequented labyrinths.

But it may be a reasonable question, whether this propensity to deviation may not be a weakness, rather than a superior strength of mind; whether it is not sometimes the voluntary effect of pride and affectation; and whether it is not oftener caused by a restlessness of constitution, than by a more energetic activity, or an acuter perception. Sensibility of mind, and fineness of feelings, are always the attendants of true genius. These, which by themselves constitute a good heart, when joined to a good head, naturally give a greater tendency to virtue than to vice; for they are charmed with beauty, and disgusted with every kind of deformity. Virtue, therefore, who is amiable in the eyes of our enemies, must have additional charms for those whose susceptibility of beauty is more delicate and refined; and Vice, who is loathsome in her nature, must appear uncommonly odious to those who are singularly shocked at all real turpitude.

Nor are there wanting instances, that men of the most exalted genius can be men of the most unspotted virtue. Addison, the glory of our nation, was only equalled in his abilities by his piety, by the purity of his morals, the integrity of his heart, and the prudence of his discretion. Pope was a man of exemplary piety and goodness. Gay, though licentious in his writings, is said to have been uncontaminated by the vices of the world; and though instances are numerous on the other side, yet these few are sufficient for the refutation of that prevalent notion, that great genius is incompatible with steady prudence and consistent virtue.

The folly of those who are only pretenders to genius, and who affect vice as essential to the character they assume, is as pitiable as it is ridiculous. Their egregious vanity will probably render all addresses to them useless; but they may take it as an infallible prediction, that dear-bought experience will soon induce them to wish they had altered their conduct, when it shall be too late to enjoy the benefits of an early amendment.

The fatal error of supposing vice the characteristic of spirit, has led many a parent to undo the child whose happiness he most wished to promote. The man of parts and fashion sends, indeed, his boy to school; but cannot bear that he should apply to books with any remarkable diligence, lest he should be mistaken for a plodder; nor that he should be singularly tractable and modest, lest he should be thought deficient in spirit; but ventures to form sanguine hopes of his future eminence, if he is ringleader in every riot, and fortunate enough to obtain at school the appellation of a Pickle.

Great writers have indeed indirectly patronised the cause of scepticism and immorality; but if names are to have weight in this argument, to a Hume, a Rousseau, a Voltaire, we may confidently oppose a Lowth, a Hurd, a Porteus, a Johnson, and many more in the retired walks of literary life, whom every Virtue, as well as every Muse, is proud to claim as her deserving votary.

ON THE PREVALENCE OF RELIGIOUS SCEPTICISM.

Of all the methods which the vanity of man has devised with a view to acquire distinction, there is none easier than that of professing a disbelief of the established religion. That which shocks the feelings of those with whom we converse, cannot fail of attracting notice; and as the vain are usually confident, they utter their doubts with an air so oracular and decisive, as induces the simple to think them profoundly wise. Audacity, with little ingenuity, will attract attention, and this will sufficiently answer the purpose of many among the professed unbelievers. One might be diverted, if one were not hurt at seeing a circle of silly admirers, gaping and fixing their eyes on some half-learned and impudent prater, who throws out oblique insinuations against the Bible, the clergy, or the sacrament. These are fertile topics of wit and ingenuity; but it might mortify the vanity of some very vain writers and talkers, if they were to recollect, what is undoubtedly true, that it is a species of wit and ingenuity which not only the vilest, but the most stupid and illiterate, of mankind have frequently displayed in all its possible perfection.

There is, indeed, no doubt but that vanity is one of the principal causes of infidelity. It must be the sole cause of communicating it to others, by writing or conversation. For let us suppose the case of a very humane, judicious, and learned man, entertaining doubts of the truth of Christianity: if he cannot clear his doubts by examination, he will yet recollect that doubts are no certainties; and, before he endeavours to propagate his scepticism, he will ask himself these questions: Am I quite convinced that what I doubt of cannot possibly be true? If I am convinced of it, I am sure that the publication of my opinions will not do more harm than good? Is not the disturbing of any long-established civil constitution attended with confusion, rebellion, bloodshed, and ruin? And are not the majority of men more strongly attached to the religion than the government of their forefathers? Will it serve my country to introduce discontent in any species? May not these innovations in religion, which discontent may introduce, lead to all the evils which are caused by frenzy and fanaticism? Granting that I were able to make a party formidable enough to crush opposition and to exterminate Christianity, still am I certain that I act, in this instance, like a good member of society? For is not this system, whether well or ill founded, friendly to society? I must confess it; its greatest enemies have acknowledged it. What motive, then, can induce me to divulge my doubts of its authenticity; Not the good of mankind; for it is already allowed by unbelievers, that the good of mankind is interested in the belief of its divine original. Is it for my own good, and with a view to be convinced? I will not deceive myself: my motive, I suspect, is of another kind; for do I read those books which have been already written to satisfy similar doubts? Nothing but the vanity of appearing to be wiser than my credulous neighbours can induce me to interrupt the happiness of their belief. But vanity of this sort, which tends to disturb society, to injure the national morals, and to rob many thousand individuals of a copious source of sweet and solid comfort, must be pronounced extreme wickedness, according to the obvious dictates even of natural religion. I shall act the part of a good citizen and a good man by conforming to a system whose beneficial influence I feel and confess; and by endeavouring to acquire a belief in that which has, for so many centuries, been established, and which promises to soothe me in distress with the

sweetest consolations, and to brighten the dismal hour of death by the hope of a more glorious and happy state of existence. At all events, I shall have the satisfaction of having commanded myself so far, as not to have run the hazard of endangering the welfare of my fellow-creatures, either here or hereafter, by indulging a degree of vanity, which, in a creature so weak and so short-lived as myself, is a folly very inconsistent with the superior wisdom which I seem to arrogate.

I will venture to repeat, that all writers against Christianity, however they may affect even the extremes of benevolence, honour, philosophy, and enlargement of mind, are actuated by vanity and wickedness of heart. Their motives are as mean, selfish, narrow, and in every respect unjustifiable, as the tendency of their writings is mischievous. Their malice is often impotent, through the foolish sophistry of their arguments; but, if ever it be successful, it is highly injurious: and, indeed, considering their motives, and the probable consequences of their endeavours, the infidel writer is a greater enemy to society, and consequently guiltier, than the thief or the traitor. Persecution would, however, only promote his cause, and his proper punishment is contempt.

It is certainly no derogation from the character of a man of sense, to conform, even while he is so unfortunate as to doubt their truth, to the opinions of his country. His conformity will probably lead him to a train of actions and of thought, which, in due time will induce him to believe. But, if that should not happen, yet he will act as very wise and very great men have acted, in paying a respectful deference to the avowed conviction of others. The most intelligent and powerful men of ancient Rome not only appeared to believe a very absurd and hurtful system, but assisted in all its ceremonies as priests. Even Socrates, who evidently entertained some notions adequate to the dignity of the one great and supreme Being, yet thought it was a duty which he owed to his country so far as to conform to the wretched establishment, as to order, in his dying words, a sacrifice to Æsculapius. This external conformity to the national religion ought not to be confounded with hypocrisy. If indeed it is carried to extremes, or zealously affected, it certainly is very blameable and contemptible deceit; but while it keeps within the bounds of reason and moderation, it ought to be called a decent deference to the opinions of the majority, arising from humility, and from a desire to maintain the tranquillity of the state, and to continue an innocent and useful system, which has and will always greatly contribute to lessen the quantity and degree both of moral and of natural evil.

The easiest, after all, or at least the most effectual method of appearing in any character, is, really to be what we wish to appear. But belief, you will say, is not in our power, and how can we believe what appears to us incredible? Certainly you cannot, while it appears incredible, but let me ask you, whether you have taken any pains to believe, or have at once and at a glance persuaded yourself that the Christian religion is totally false? I am of opinion, that a great number of sceptical writers never gave themselves the trouble to read those scriptures which they warmly oppose. They hear objections, they read objections, and they find that from men of reputed wit and ingenuity the objections often originate. They also wish to be reputed men of wit and ingenuity, and, therefore eagerly adopt the language and sentiments of the order. Perhaps the vanity and pride of this class of men will render all attempts to convince them abortive;

but to modest doubters, and to those whose good sense, and good dispositions lead them to wish to adopt the religion of their country, it may not be useless to suggest advice, with a view to facilitate their conviction.

The chief thing required is to free themselves from the pride of human reason. Humility (and surely our blindness and imperfections are sufficient to render us humble, if we would be reasonable), humility will open our hearts, and belief will find admission. Sincere endeavours, seconded by prayers, will never fail to help our unbelief. But, alas! a fine, gay, spirited, liberal, and enlarged modern philosopher would be ashamed to be found on his knees, or with a Testament in his possession. There is scarcely any vicious act, or any vicious book, which would put him so much to the blush.

A modest well-meaning man might, however, I should think, divest himself of those prejudices which prevent the possibility of belief by the following soliloquy: "I find myself placed in a world abounding with evil and misery. Under the immediate pressure of it, I feel my heart inclining, like the needle to the north, by its natural tendency, to the Deity for support. Man, of all animals, is the only one who has the sense of religion. Feeling this distinctive propensity of my nature, I look around to discover to what object, and in what manner, that part of my fellow-creatures, who live in the same society with myself, pay their adoration. I find a system of religion already established, and which has been established in the most enlightened countries of the earth, near two thousand years. I resolve to examine it. It claims that respect from its antiquity and universality. Many difficulties appear on the first inspection. My reason is often startled, and my belief wavers. But I will not yet give up a point of so serious importance without farther and closer attention to it. I reflect, that two thousand years is a vast space in the age of the world. How many myriads of men like myself have lived and died in the faith during that time! And were all of them fools or hypocrites? It could not have been. Can the understanding of a poor individual just come into the world, and hardly knowing where he is, comprehend on intuition an object of such magnitude, and make the mighty discovery, which has escaped millions of the wisest and most learned of mortals? Or, supposing that they all perceived the deception, am I, then, at last, the only honest man who will confess it? I am ashamed to avow such an idea to myself. But yet, if I reject what they received, surely I avow it in the more expressive language of my conduct. Pride, I fear, is the foundation of my scepticism; and humility the basis of my belief. I will check my own presumption, and reject the cavils of vain and foolish philosophy. Shall a poor weak creature, who cometh up like a flower, and is cut down, who fleeth as a shadow, and never continueth in one stay, presume to pronounce decisively in that little period, in which he has scarcely time to look about him before he dies, against a system which has strong internal and external evidence of divine original, which is most useful and comfortable, and which has been admitted among a great portion of mankind during almost twenty centuries? No; it is the first wisdom to be humble. Humility will be followed by grace, and grace by faith, and faith by salvation. It plainly appears, that I can lose nothing by belief, but some of those excessive and irregular enjoyments which would destroy my health and life; but I may possibly gain a glory and a happiness which shall continue to all eternity."

NEWS OF THE WEEK.

STATE OF NEW-YORK.

GENERAL ORDERS.

Head Quarters, New-York, 6th May, 1809.

The Commander in Chief, agreeably to instructions from the President of the 29th day of April last, directs that the detachment of 14,389 of the Militia of this State, required by General Orders of the 15th day of November, 1808, be no longer held in readiness for actual service; and in compliance with those instructions, he with great pleasure avails himself of this occasion to present to those Corps, whose patriotism has induced them to volunteer their services, the approbation and thanks of the President of the United States.

The Commander in Chief cannot forbear to express his satisfaction at the national measures, which have superseded the necessity of continuing the detachment in readiness for service; nor can he, without doing injustice to his own feelings, withhold from his fellow-citizens, who have generously tendered their services, an assurance of his cordial approbation of their conduct, and of the emotions of pride and pleasure awakened in his breast by their fidelity to the just rights and independence of their country.

By order of the Commander in Chief,

WM. PAULDING, jun. Adjutant-General.

General Bright, and the other citizens of the militia, who were sentenced to fine and imprisonment at Philadelphia, for resisting the execution of the laws of the United States in the case of Olmstead, have been released; the President of the United States having, in special form, remitted both species of penalty, considering the law as satisfied so far as relates to those citizens who acted under the erroneous orders of the Governor of the State.

By the bring Nancy and Caty, which arrived at Philadelphia on Tuesday the 9th inst, in 14 days from St. Bartholomews, accounts are received of Admiral Cochran's having taken the Saints, and captured the French squadron which had taken refuge in the harbour.

A passenger in the ship United States, which arrived at Alexandria on Monday from St. Bartholomews, informs, that the English had commenced the bombardment of the Saints a few days before he sailed. The three French men of war that had escaped from the Saints had succeeded in getting into Guadaloupe, and landed a supply of provisions and men, and had sailed again from that place. The morning the ship sailed, a gentleman came on board and informed that a vessel had just arrived from St. Thomas, which brought accounts of the capture of St. Domingo by the British. It was expected that Guadaloupe would not stand out long, the British had commenced the bombardment.

Don Joseph Ygnatius de Viar has been appointed, by the Supreme and Governmental Junta of Spain and the Indies, in the name of king Ferdinand the 7th, Conjoint Charge d'Affairs of his Catholic Majesty, (with the Chevalier de Forondo) near the United States of America.

A Copper-mine has been discovered in Virginia on a spur of the Blue Ridge; it is one and an half mile long, and from twenty five to seventy yards wide; it has been dug down to the depth of ten feet, and the earth at that point was as much impregnated with the metal as at its surface. The Government of the U. S. has taken an interest in the mine.

NEW-YORK, May 18.

The common council have ordered that the City Inspector the Attorney of the Board, the Superindendant of the streets, and other Officers of the Board, to whom the same may appertain, take measures, without delay, to have the laws respecting the sweeping and cleaning of the streets, and taking away the manure, rubbish and other matters which incumber the streets, duly executed, and that they cause prosecutions to be commenced without delay for all offences in the premises.

Vincennes, (I. T.) April 9.

Governor Harrison received on Monday last a special express from Governor Lewis, by which he is informed that an association has been entered into by a band of the Winnebagoes and Puans, now living on the Illinois river, with others of the nation residing in Louisana, and by the Iowas, and some other of the Mississippi tribes, for the purpose of attacking fort Belle Vue (a fort lately erected by the United States on the Mississippi, in the neighborhood of the Le Moin) and waging war on the frontiers of Illinois and Louisiana.

A party of the above association had made their appearance in the settlement of Goshen, in the county of St. Clair, a few days before the express set out, all armed with new muskets, and had taken off in their retreat fifteen horses. They were pursued by Captain Whitesides and twenty men, and whilst Governor Lewis was writing a dispatch, information was received that Whitesides and his party were cut off; the report however, was not credited by the Governor.

It gives us pleasure to say that we are authorised by Governor Harrison explicitly to state, that he has every reason to believe the tribes of the Wabash continue firm and unshaken in their attachment to the U. States.

Le Chevalier de Forondo, Consul General of H. C. M. Ferdinand VII. received on Wednesday a letter from the Captain General of the Island of Puerto Rico, informing him that no other port in said island except St. John's, is open to American vessels, but that they will be permitted to sail for any other port for the purpose of taking on board a cargo, if the government should think it necessary; at the same time the Captain General requires that the vessels should be furnished with documents from the consuls.

LONDON, March 20.

INSURRECTION IN SWEDEN.

Dispatches have been received from the Baltic, which, we grieve to state, give an account of an insurrection having broken out in Sweden, tending to a revolution. Several thousands have risen in the Province of Warmland, and were on their march from Caristod to Stockholm, to compel the King to call a Diet. They had issued a Proclamation, complaining of the war, taxes, &c. and requiring a change of measures.

ODE TO SUSPICION,

BY G. TURNBULL.

Degeneros animos timor arguit. Vir.

Ah! who is yon with haggard mein,
That lurks in secret place unseen;
Yet from the den where he is pent,
Full many a wary look is sent;
Now every way with cautious gaze,
The wide extended space surveys,
Looking around with eyes askance,
Then sudden turns with eager glance,
When, hark! he hears the rushing wind
Disturb the rustling leaves behind;
Then down upon the earth, aghast,
In haste his trembling limbs are cast.

Yes, now I know the monster well:
Suspicion, progeny of hell;
Of Guilt begot, of Danger born,
And nurs'd in Fear's grim cave forlorn:
Away, tormenting fiend, away,
Nor urge with Innocence thy stay!
Hence! and in some dreary cell
With the trembling miser dwell;
Feed him with fantastic fears
Of want in his declining years;
Bid each hollow blast that blows
Wake the wretch from short repose,
To snatch his bags, and eager hold
From fancied thieves his idol gold.
Find where, immers'd in tears and sighs,
The half neglected lover lies;
And place full in his tortur'd sight
His fair inconstant all the night:
And to augment his soul's despair,
Place thou his hated rival there;
Let him the willing charmer kiss
And feast in luxury of bliss.

Or find where under midnight skies
Athwart the gloom the murd'rer flies;
Whilst he the stings of conscience feels,
Be thou, fell monster, at his heels;
Possess his madly beating brains
With racks and gibbets, whips and chains;
Let every bush and waving tree
Pursuing bloodhounds seem to be!
Or find the *man* whose *iron* sway
Makes abject prostrate slaves obey,
Who by oppression swells his state,
And in their misery grows great;
Picture some chief whom Justice draws,
Aiming the meritorious blow
To lay the ruthless *tyrant* low!

For me, no wealth I have to keep,
No gold to break my silent sleep,
No faithless maid my fancy warms,
No rival youth my fears alarms,
No blood my guiltless hand hath stain'd,
Oppression's rod I ne'er maintain'd;
Free is my heart and void of fear,
Then come not with thy scorpions here;
Thy foul suggestions hurt not me,
The guilty only harbour thee:
Then hence! tormenting fiend! away!
Nor urge with Innocence thy stay.

MARRIED,

On Monday evening, by the rev. Dr. Beach, Mr. Grove Wright, to Miss Harriet Ludlow.

On the 11th inst. by the rev. Dr. M' Knight, Mr. Anthony Woodward, to Miss Susannah Shourt, all of this city.

On the 6th inst. by the rev. Dr. Livingston, Mr. John Finlay, of Canada, to Miss Ann Beekman of this city.

On Wednesday evening the 10th inst. by the rev. Mr Halloway W. Hunt, Mr. William Johnson, merchant of this city, to Miss Susannah Bray, of Lebanon N J.

At Fairfield, Conn. on Monday the 8th inst. by the Rev. Dr. Hezekiah Ripley, Mr. Thomas Andrews, merchant, of this city, to Miss Mary Banks.

BILL OF MORTALITY.

from the 7th to the 14th May.

	Years.		Years.
Wm. Lee	84	Wm. Cane	40
Augustus Finch	29	Carey Dunn, sen.	80
Jane Cahoo	35	Robert Allen	60
Charles Harley	40	Dan Murphy	66
Mary Lowden	40	Joseph Bell	48
Robert Berry	1	Harriot Fai	2
Catharine Ward	23	Ann M. Elm	84
Jacobus Myers	84	Cæsar Lee	74
Wm. Durel	55	Elizabeth Sowelle	46
Lewis Sevell	51	Wm. Buckland	44
Mary Cutter	63	Mrs. Burk's child	8
Baltus Moore's ch.	2	Charles Snarr's child	
Wm. Williams, blk.	24	John Richards' child	
Mr. Meni's child	3 m.	A still-born child.	